Currituck
National Wildlife Refuge

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Refuge Facts
■ Established: 1984.

■ Acres: 3,213.

■ Located in Currituck County, NC.

■ Location: the refuge is located 3/4 of a mile north of Corolla, NC. NC Route 12 ends in Corolla. After the road ends proceed up the beach 3/4 of a mile to the first refuge tract.

Natural History
■ Refuge is found in the northern portion of Currituck Sound on an Outerbanks barrier island. Some tracts transition from the Atlantic Ocean to Currituck Sound which include sandy beaches, grassy dunes, maritime forests, shrub thickets, and fresh and brackish marshes.

■ Concentrations of wading birds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and raptors with a variety of mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Piping plover and loggerhead sea turtles occasionally nest on the refuge.

■ Wetlands .... 1,253 acres.
Woodlands .... 770 acres.
Brush .... 772 acres.
Beach .... 418 acres.

Financial Impact of Refuge
■ 15,000 visitors annually.

■ Managed as a satellite of Mackay Island NWR with no assigned staff or budget.

Refuge Objectives
■ Protect and improve the last remaining habitat of the endangered or threatened piping plover, loggerhead sea turtle and seabeach amaranth.

■ Actively manage and improve the interdunal flats for wintering waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds through discing, planting and a proactive water management plan.

■ Pursue an active land acquisition program on the Outer Banks.

■ Through various techniques, develop a database and working knowledge on neotropical bird use.

Management Tools
■ Water management for waterfowl.

■ Prescribed fire.

■ Mechanical control of noxious plants.

■ Education/interpretation.

■ Law enforcement.

■ Partnerships.

Public Use Opportunities.
■ Wildlife observation.

■ Photography.

■ Hiking.

Questions and Answers
What recreational opportunities are there on Currituck NWR?
Currituck Refuge does not have any developed public use facilities such as roads, trails, restrooms, or a visitor contact station. The refuge is open daily, from sunrise to sunset, throughout the year. Hiking, wildlife observation, and nature photography are the primary wildlife-dependent activities that may be enjoyed on the refuge. Vehicle access is limited to the Monkey Island Tract and the Swan Island Tract. A four-wheeled drive vehicle is necessary since the only access is on the beach. Traffic is restricted to the beachfront only. The rest of the refuge is accessed by foot only to help prevent damage to the fragile dune ecosystem. Currently no hunting is allowed on the refuge.

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Where are the wild horses? Can I pet or feed them?

The wild horses found on the Outerbanks are descedents of the Spanish mustangs brought to the coast of North America by early Spanish explorers more than 400 years ago. The local residents feel that these horses are part of the historic and cultural heritage of the area and are part of the ecosystem and wish to protect them. Due to concerns for the safety of the horses and humans, county ordinances were established to safeguard all concerned. It is unlawful for anyone to harm, approach, feed, or kill any wild horse in the Wild Horse Sanctuary (The Outerbanks from the Dare County line to the Virginia State line). Wild horses are seen from time to time on the Currituck NWR lands. Visitors are encouraged to look from a distance and not to feed or pet them because they are wild and can behave aggressively.

Why is ATV traffic restricted to the beach?

The Currituck NWR was established to protect the dynamic and fragile character of coastal barrier islands. Access to the interior of the barrier island must be restricted to foot traffic due to the fragile nature of the dune ecosystem. ATV use in the dunes destroys dune vegetation. Without this vegetation, sand dunes become unstable and more susceptible to wind and wave damage. Established sand dunes provide defense against storms and protect the maritime forest and interdunal habitats from impacts.